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MICHIGAN ADULT LEARNING WORK GROUP

The aim of the Michigan Adult Learning Work Group is to look broadly at the need for basic skills improvement among adults in the state, and to reimagine the adult learning infrastructure. This will require examining a broad swathe of adult learners - - cutting across program silos. We are deliberately using the term "adult learning infrastructure" because we want to encourage the Work Group to think beyond the normal boundaries of existing programs, departments, and institutions. We suspect that problems exist in some areas of adult learning. Crucially, we know that the current adult learning infrastructure does meet the needs of some participants, but by no means is meeting the needs of everyone. We are not, however, going into this work operating under the assumption that the current "system" is failing. We want to shift our focus instead to the question, What is the need in Michigan (around adult basic skills improvement) and what mix of policy and practice is needed to get us there? One of the reasons for drawing this Work Group from several key areas of the adult learning world is that we want to learn from them and we want them to learn from each other.

This work is on behalf of the Council for Labor & Economic Growth's Low Wage Worker Advancement Strategy Committee, which has set a goal of bringing before the full Council on September 9 a final set of policy and program recommendations about what should comprise Michigan's next generation adult learning strategy. This will probably involve policy recommendations concerning K-12 GED curricula; program suggestions for community colleges; new roadmaps to success through MWAs; and new partnerships for everyone with literacy councils, intermediate school districts, neighborhood reading programs and other folks involved with adult learning. We'd also be interested in seeing what the Work Group comes up with in terms of pilot programs: perhaps two pilots that show promise and could be effectively implemented in a couple of areas with extreme need of basic skills improvements.

Michigan Adult Learning Work Group

WORK PLAN

Sub- work group	Defining the Need	Mapping MI's Adult Learning Programs	Employers' Issues	Strategy Design
Main questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the profile of adults lacking basic skills? • What trends do we see in terms of who needs remedial education, where they live, what jobs they work(ed) and what they want to do? • How many students have learning ability challenges, how are they diagnosed, what interventions are available? • Looking at the gaps in knowledge (identified during the March 18 meeting), how can we gather information that fills some of those gaps? • How much do we know about what adult learners think about their barriers, why education is important, etc.? • To what extent is financial need a barrier? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do things really operate on the ground (in a few sample communities)? • What are some adult learning pathways that students typically follow? (E.g., after dropping out of school; upskilling while employed; employer-paid ed.) • What innovations can be found from local partnerships? • Identifying duplication of services • What are some region-specific barriers that are blocking adult learners' paths? • Given what we know about what isn't working, how will we define success? Metrics identification will be important here. • Where does financial aid play a role, positive or negative? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to know more from employers about what skill sets are important to them; what form of credentialing they prioritize; and how amenable they are to partnering with local CCs, MWAs, GED programs, etc., to ensure that existing employees get the skills they need. • How can we integrate basic skills development with occupational training programs? • How can we leverage private sector funds/resources to get adult education and "upskilling" opportunities to more workers? • What are some promising practices already in place (CVS, for example) that might provide insightful policy/program innovations for our work? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What core characteristics are needed in policy and service delivery to achieve success? • What are options for delivery and management roles that align with making our strategies work effectively? • What are the choices for how to fund this effort? • How do we create the appropriate sense of urgency about increasing basic skills among Michigan adults? • What are some promising alignments among JET, NWLB, WIRED initiatives and other adult education programs? • Using the existing robust body of literature concerned with adult learning and remedial education, what insights do they give us into our policy/strategy options?
Time frame	Need to prepare data profile and report on trends by April 15 mtg.	Ready to present map and preliminary answers to above questions by May meeting.	Ready to present findings by the June meeting.	Give initial strategy recommendations during the June meeting, final by August.
Member recommendations (not comprehensive; these are "essentials", with room for others)	Sharon Parks – Chair Dianne Duthie Tracy Hall Dennis Hart Jim Jacobs Susan Ledy Bob Steeh Chris Van Heel Fiona Greenland – Staff Support	Katie Wolf – Chair Pam Gosla Barry Kinsey Susan Ledy Ray Telman Gary Tweddle Erica Nakfoor – Staff Support	Adriana Nichols – Chair Lena Barkley Patty Cantu Luann Dunsford Chuck Jones Mitch Tomlinson Peter Ruark – Staff Support	Jim Jacobs – Chair Ed Bagale Tracy Hall Chuck Jones Christy Nelson Robert Matthews Sharon Parks Gary Tweddle Larry Good – Staff Support